

George Washington Birthplace National Monument
Relative Legislation

National Park Service Organic Act, 1916

The Service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations . . . by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. (16 USC 1)

Wakefield National Memorial Association Authorizing Legislation

Congress, by Act of June 7, 1926, authorized the Wakefield National Memorial Association:

...to build, operate and maintain upon the plot of ground owned by the United States at Wakefield * * * a replica, as nearly as may be practicable, of the house in which George Washington was born, to be used and occupied in such manner and for such purposes in preserving the memory of George Washington as may be appropriate. (44 Stat. 669)

George Washington Birthplace National Monument Enabling Legislation

January 23, 1930, Congress provided for the formal establishment of George Washington Birthplace National Monument. It further gave consent to the Wakefield National Memorial Association to construct the "replica of the house in which George Washington was born," for "restoring and improving the gardens and grounds," and for "erecting other such buildings as shall be deemed necessary." Congress further specified that the Association would "on completion of the restoration" convey all of its buildings and grounds here "to the United States as a gift for administration, protection and maintenance," and

That the said premises and all structures thereon shall constitute the George Washington Birthplace National Monument at Wakefield, Virginia which is hereby established and set apart for the preservation of the historical associations connected therewith, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.

GEORGE WASHINGTON BIRTHPLACE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Statement of Significance

An Act of Congress dated January 23, 1930 (46 Stat. 58) established George Washington Birthplace National Monument as the first historic site in the National Park Service and states the park's purpose:

That the said premises and all structures thereon shall constitute the George Washington Birthplace National Monument which is hereby established and set apart for the preservation of the historical associations connected therewith, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people and the said national monument shall be hereafter administered by the National Park Service under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior subject to the provisions of the Act of August 25, 1916.

In 1930, National Park Service Director Horace M. Albright stated the establishment of George Washington Birthplace National Monument marked "...the entrance of this service into the field of preservation on a more comprehensive scale."

The basic function of the monument is the memorialization of George Washington and his birth site along with the preservation of the remaining historic resources of the area associated with his life.

Bounded by the waters of Popes Creek, Bridges Creek, and the Potomac River, this national monument of fields, forests, and marsh contains the plantation grounds and sites of a number of historic structures associated with the Washington family and the birth and boyhood of George Washington. Here is the heart of the plantation owned by Augustine Washington, George's father, and the site of the house in which George was born. On the banks of Bridges Creek stood the second home of John Washington, George's great grandfather and the first Washington to settle in Virginia's Northern Neck. Near to this site is the Washington Family Burial Ground which contains the remains of the father, grandfather, and great grandfather of George Washington and other early family members.

George Washington lived at Popes Creek Plantation from his birth, February 22, 1732, until age 3 1/2 when his family moved to Little Hunting Creek (Mount Vernon). After his father's death in 1743, the plantation passed on to George's half brother Augustine, Jr. George returned to Popes Creek in his teens on visits of undetermined length and frequency. An existing survey of the Bridges Creek area made by George in 1747, at age 15, documents at least one of his visits.

Archaeologists have recovered thousands of artifacts at the monument during investigations in the 1930's and, more recently, in 1974-1975. Subsurface building foundations still remain, including the birth house of George Washington and several outbuildings. Subsurface remains of the John Washington and Henry Brooks sites have also

been located (Henry Brooks obtained the first land patent on these grounds in 1657).

Onsite Federal commemoration of George Washington's birthplace began in 1896 with construction of a 55 foot granite memorial shaft. Further commemoration greatly influenced the appearance of the monument. In 1923, the Wakefield National Memorial Association was organized to undertake the substantial task of commemorating the 200th Anniversary of George Washington's birth. Congress authorized in 1926 the building of '... a replica,... of the house in which George Washington was born, to be used and occupied in such manner and such purposes in preserving the memory of George Washington...'. The completed buildings, memorial structures and landscaped grounds and 367 acres of land including the restored Washington Family Burial Ground were turned over to the United States in 1932. Additional acreage has been added to the park since that time.